Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT   Saturday, March 25, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "BEHIND THE SCENES IN FROZEN VEGETABLE RESEARCH." Information from Mr. H. C. Diehl, Frozen Pack Laboratory, Bureau of Chemistry and Soils.

--ooOoo--

When your husband asks for several helpings of peas at dinner and says: "My, those frozen peas are good....just like fresh peas out of the garden.... maybe better," you probably don't stop to think of all the patient work of scientists that has made such good products possible. You may not know that plant breeders and chemists and engineers and cookery experts have all contributed to the fine quality of those frozen vegetables.

Just as an illustration, let me tell you what scientists under Mr. H. C. Diehl have been doing in the last 8 years at the Frozen Pack Laboratory at Seattle, Washington. When freezing proved to be a successful method for preserving fresh foods, it soon became evident that some varieties froze more successfully than others. In the case of peas, the varieties that the plant breeders developed for canning proved to be unsatisfactory for freezing. And the garden varieties that were so good for cooking fresh weren't so successful either. So the scientists in the Bureau of Plant Industry and in the State Experiment Stations got busy testing out all the different varieties until they found the strains that grew best and gave the largest yield. Incidentally for many farmers, another desirable quality came into the picture. Farmers who raised peas to sell for freezing often also were dairymen. They wanted to raise peas that had plenty of leaves and vine to use for feeding their cows. Then, because peas for freezing are harvested by mowing machines, not by hand, farmers wanted varieties of peas that would mature practically all at the same time. And, of course, they wanted varieties best suited to growing in that particular region.

After long testing the scientists were able to tell farmers which varieties had these various desirable characteristics. They found that peas which were wrinkled and of the green seed-coated variety were suitable for freezing. Then they went on to make the same tests for lima beans, green beans, asparagus, corn and other varieties used for freezing. Recently they have been studying the best varieties to grow on irrigated land for freezing.

Aside from the variety tests, the scientists at the Frozen Pack Laboratory joined in studies of the best methods of freezing and handling. They found out exactly when vegetables were ripe enough to freeze best, how to ship them to the freezing plant, how to prepare them for freezing, and the temperature at which they froze best.

When farm housewives began bringing their garden products to local freezer-locker plants, the scientists advised as to the methods for freezing garden products for home use.

The next step was a study of the best methods of cooking these frozen foods. So Mildred Boggs, home economist at the Washington State Experiment Station, has been cooking these different frozen vegetables. Very shortly she will report exactly how to cook frozen vegetables so they will be most delicious.

At present the scientists and the frozen foods industry are interested in standards or grades for frozen foods. When they have worked out tests for quality and established the grades, you will probably be able to ask your grocer for Grade A or Grade B frozen peas and know exactly what quality you are buying.

So you see how the Federal and State plant breeders, chemists, engineers, bacteriologists and home economists are all working together to help the farmer who raises the vegetables, the industry that processes them, the housewife who cooks them, and the family who eats them.

By the way, perhaps you'll be interested in some of the freezing prospects for this coming summer.

Peas are still the most popular frozen vegetable, but probably this summer will see no more peas going into freezing plants than last year when the pack was very large. Frozen asparagus and corn, however, are becoming more popular, so the industry will probably make larger frozen packs of these two vegetables.

As for fruits, you may be interested to know that there's a big demand now for more frozen peaches. But there is also always a demand for such other frozen fruits as strawberries, raspberries, youngberries, boysenberries and blueberries.

That's all the frozen food news today. But next week I'll report to you about a new frozen fruit product that promises to be very popular for ice cream making.